CHAPTER V

DIVINITY AND THE ANCESTORS

1. God

When speaking of God I refer to a being the Rindi themselves contextually distinguish from particular manifestations of spirit regarded as intermediaries between mankind and the Divinity or as His agents. God is never addressed in rites, nor does He immediately manifest Himself in the world; and as the Rindi claim to know almost nothing about Him, very little can be obtained by direct questioning. It is useful, then, to begin by considering some of the formulaic phrases they use to refer to God. Many of these are straightforwardly honorific titles, e.g., 'the most outstanding and excellent one, the greatest and the supreme' (hupu na mangunju na marihi, hupu na mabokulu na mabai). Most commonly, though, God is called mawulu tau, majii tau, 'the one who made (makes) and plaits (plaits) mankind', or na mawulu, na majii, 'the maker and plaister (of everything)'. The phrases thus specifically denote a Creator God. Like other expressions applied to the Divinity, which in context are further interpreted as references to lesser spiritual beings, however, these phrases are also used to designate the clan ancestors. But while it appears that God is never distinguished absolutely from subordinate manifestations of spirit, mawulu tau (the short form of the expression) is usually understood to refer to a being distinct from and superior to these.

Several expressions that refer to God combine the terms ina, 'mother', and ama, 'father', e.g., ina ukurungu, ama ukurungu, 'the common, communal mother and father'. As I shall later show, whenever the terms are thus conjoined they denote a superior. The referents of such expressions, however, are not always connected in any way with divinity or spirituality; nor do they always clearly manifest male and female elements or aspects. In general, then, the combination of the two terms might simply be construed as an instance of the general linguistic practice of representing a unity dyadically, with elements
which manifestly or according to native interpretation are distinguishable as masculine and feminine. In this case, however, the apparent reference to masculine and feminine qualities is consistent with an idea of God as a unity of opposed values and the unitary source of all being. This is also suggested by the commonest way of referring to God, since *wulu*, ‘to make, create’, ‘to raise (livestock)’, so far as I could determine, is applied only to male labours, while *jii*, ‘to plait (e.g., baskets)’, denotes an exclusively feminine activity. Though I have so far referred to God as He, this is largely an expository convenience. While some people I asked were sure He was male, others were doubtful; and I often got the impression that the question was for them a novel one. This accords with the fact that, in contrast to certain other manifestations of spirit, the Rindi seem rarely if ever to conceive of God in an embodied form.

The anonymity and obscurity of God is shown by the designations ‘the one whose name is not mentioned, whose title is not uttered’ (*pandapeku tamu, pandanyura ngara*), and ‘the silent and the still, the obscure and the dark’ (*na makandii makanawa, na makanjudingu makapàtangu*). The latter were also said to denote the abode of the Divinity. Several phrases indicate an otiose and immobile God, e.g., ‘the one who has his hands on his cheeks, and folded arms’ (*na manjura pipi, na maanggu luku*), which, I was told, describe a nobleman who commands but never acts. Another pair of terms with much the same import which the Rindi sometimes interpret as a reference to God is *mahanggula, mahanganji*. On its own, *mahanganji* (or *hanganji*) is the title of an elderly noble ruler who has abdicated in favour of his heir. *Mahanggula* is considered a synonym of *mahanganji* in Rindi. These phrases accord with the Rindi idea that, after creating the world, God ceased to be active and transferred responsibility for human affairs to the clan ancestors and other classes of spirits. But other expressions, which represent God as a rather more dynamic, all-knowing divinity who watches over and judges the actions of mankind, seem to contradict this image. Thus He is called ‘the one who looks carefully and surveys thoroughly’ (*na mailu paniningu, na mangadu katàndakungu*), ‘the one with big eyes and broad ears’ (*na mabokulu wua matana, na mambàlaru kahiluna*), and ‘the one who attends to those who transgress and err, who deviate and diverge’ (*na mapatandangu manjipu manjala, na mahiliru na mahàngatu*). While no fault can be hidden from God, however, retribution is always carried out by other forces; so although God might yet retain ultimate control over the world, He
Himself does not act. Similarly, while the Rindi attribute a person's fate and the time and circumstances of his birth and death to God, they also say these things are determined by other entities, notably the individual's ancestral namesake. This I think shows that all forms of spirit tend at some point to be identified with God in Rindi. As a totality in whom are united opposed elements and qualities, therefore, He can be conceived as both dynamic and otiose (see Tobing 1956: 25-6).

Although I was told that God can be 'present' (ningu) in or on the earth, He is usually identified with the sky. It is somewhat surprising, then, that the Rindi do not refer to God with the names of the sun and moon, a form of designation extremely common in eastern Indonesia. But as one informant did speculate that God was like fire, the sun, and gold — all of which, it is worth noting, are things that shine — and He is occasionally linked with the sun and moon in myth, the association is probably not entirely absent from their thought. As is common elsewhere in Indonesia, the nobility, who are in other ways represented as analogous to God, moreover, are designated as the children of the sun and the moon. I might also mention here the association, which I shall later demonstrate, between various forms of spirit or divinity and precious metals: though these are said to come from the earth, they are thought ultimately to derive from the sun, the moon, and the stars.

A link with divinity is rather more clearly shown in the case of the Pleiades, Antares, and the morning star. The morning star, (kandunu) marai romu, is regarded as a bringer of prosperity and fertility. Thus what the Rindi consider to be the normal time of its rising, about an hour or so before sunrise, is the prescribed time for certain component performances of life cycle rites and the first fruits ceremony (see Chapter VIII). On the first day of the wet rice harvest a rite concerned with ensuring a good yield is held in the village at this hour, as is the final rite of the incest ceremony (see Chapter XVI). In all these cases, then, the morning star is connected with coming into being or renewal, which is apparently related to the fact that its appearance precedes and so forebodes the rising of the sun. Indeed, the star is thought once to have been another sun. The Atoni describe the morning star as the younger brother of God, whose 'most tangible manifestation' in this society is the sun (Schulte Nordholt 1971:142, 145).

Another pair of phrases that is used to refer to God is ina pakawurungu, ama pakawurungu, 'mother and father clustered together'. Pakawurungu derives from kawuru, 'cluster', the name of the Pleiades, while the shorter form of the expression, ina pakawurungu, can also
Rindi
denote this constellation. In Rindi I recorded several versions of a
myth, found elsewhere in eastern Indonesia, which concerns why the
Pleiades and Antares (*tau awangu*, ‘man in the sky’) are located directly
opposite one another in the heavens and so never appear together at
night. The myth tells of a brother and sister who by inadvertently mar-
rying committed the original act of incest. In order to separate them,
the woman was banished to the place of *ina pakawurungu*, identified
as the Pleiades, and her brother to Antares, ‘so that they might never
again look upon one another’s faces’. For this reason each star does not
rise until the other has set. The Pleiades thus appear just after sunset
at the start of the wet season, while the evening rising of Antares marks
the coming of the dry season.\(^9\) Although it is not entirely clear from the
versions I recorded whether the couple actually became the stars, Ka-
pita (1976a:166), who briefly summarizes a variant of the myth,
expressly states that they did. That the incestuous pair are identified
with God is suggested by the fact that in one version of the myth the
woman (and in another, the man and woman together) is designated as
‘the one who looks carefully and surveys thoroughly’ and ‘the one with
big eyes and broad ears’. As noted, these phrases are also applied to the
Divinity. Another indication is the expression ‘where the clouds sprout
upwards, the Pleiades and the year sign’ (*kahuluku karumangu, kawiru
tanda ndaungu*),\(^10\) which denotes the abode of God. These connexions
suggest then that the stars, the incestuous couple, and God are mani-
festations of one and the same entity.

The myth should also be considered as an explanation of the origin
of incest; indeed, it was with this purpose that it was first told to me.
Thus the destiny of the woman, after she is banished to the Pleiades, is
described as ‘to pour down indigo and lime water’ (*buringu wai wora,
wai kapu*), in order to confound the senses and blind the eyes, so that
men and women will not recognize their ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’.\(^11\) This
is the reason people sometimes commit incest. Incest and its con-
sequences, then, are apparently conceived as a sort of punishment, either
for the original act or as a general means of divine retribution. But
since the mythical woman is a manifestation of the Divinity, it also
follows that incest is, in a sense, brought about by God. It should be
noted here that the Rindi credit God with the creation and ultimate
governance of all things, both good and bad; hence the fact that He can be
implicated in something so contrary to order and propriety as incest
is more easily accommodated to their view of Him than might at first
appear. Another possible reason for this association, however, is that
from the original incest and its resolution derive certain distinctions essential to the coming into being of the present world. One of these is the division of the year into a wet and a dry season, the alternation of which is fundamental to Rindi notions of time. The division, which is symbolically equivalent to and entailed in the separation of the incestuous pair, is also shown to be essential to the genesis of crops. Thus one version of the myth states that the man and the woman are removed to the stars 'so that the maize may reach its early stage of growth, and the rice may make its first appearance above the ground'. It is also relevant that of the three (male) children born of the incestuous union, two are placed respectively at the Head of the Earth and the kawindu talora, the place of the yard altar in the village (see Chapter VI), both of which are closely connected with fertility and prosperity; the third is then killed and from parts of his body spring various food crops. The places to which they are assigned, therefore, link the children and their parents with the earth and the sky respectively. Although it is not mentioned in this myth, the creation of the world is thought to have involved the masculine sky and the feminine earth coming together and then separating, an act which is thus analogous to the original incest and the subsequent separation of the protagonists, from one another and from their children. Incest thus figures in the myth as a precondition of certain distinctions fundamental to creation; so in this way its connexion with the unitary God, who is the ultimate source of these distinctions, becomes intelligible.

2. Marapu

One indication of the importance of the concept of marapu is the Rindi practice of calling their traditional religion 'the marapu religion' in order to distinguish it from Christianity or Islam. The word comprises the relative pronoun ma and the root rapu. Lambooy (1937:428, 437) interprets rapu as a combination of ra, 'big, many', and either apu (actually àpu), 'grandmother, ancestor', or pu, a root which appears in various forms as an honorific, and as a reference to deities, throughout the Indonesian languages (see Chapter XIV, Section 5). Kapita (1976a:87), who outlines a similar etymology, explains ra, also, as an honorific. He further compares marapu with Manggarai rapu, 'corpse' (see Verheijen 1967), and Donggo rafo, 'soul of a dead man'.

Although in some contexts the connexion is at best indirect, when asked the Rindi will invariably identify marapu with the apical ancestors.
of the clans. The use of the word in eastern Sumba thus differs from that encountered in the west, where it is further applied to a variety of other spiritual manifestations, the eastern equivalents of which have distinct names.\textsuperscript{18} We may begin, therefore, by considering the place of the first ancestors in Rindi religious life. In accordance with the rule of patrilineal descent, the \textit{marapu} of a clan is usually spoken of as a single male ancestor. (The one exception to this in Rindi is the clan Kanilu, whose principal ancestral figure is a woman). The ancestor is thus addressed as ‘Lord’ (Umbu) and designated with a single proper name. In rites, however, a longer formulaic title which includes, besides the ancestor’s usual name, several other names or descriptive epithets, thus comprising all together two or sometimes more pairs of names, is employed.\textsuperscript{19} Occasionally, when these include proper names in current use, one encounters both male and female names, which the Rindi then often explain as those of the wives, brothers, children, and other close relatives of the apical male ancestor. Since the title can thus encompass more than one generation, \textit{marapu} can be said more generally to refer to the earliest ancestors of a clan. With certain contextual exceptions, of which I shall later provide an example, however, the term normally denotes a unitary entity.

The title of a clan’s \textit{marapu} is usually distinct from those of the ancestors of other clans. Sometimes, though, two titles include component names in common, as when two clans are reputed to derive from two full brothers, while in other instances a name interpreted as that of the father of a group of separate clan ancestors is included in their respective titles. This personage is then called the \textit{marapu ukurungu}, ‘common, communal \textit{marapu}’, a phrase which recalls the expression \textit{ina ukurungu}, \textit{ama ukurungu} as a name for God. There are also a few distinctly named clans in eastern Sumba that recognize exactly the same \textit{marapu} ancestor, but this is uncommon.

The major axiom of eastern Sumbanese religion is that man cannot communicate directly with God. The clan ancestor, therefore, serves as an intermediary; he is the ‘laid out bridge and extended crook’ (\textit{lindi papakalangu}, \textit{ketu papajolangu}) which connects mankind with the Divinity. The ancestor is also a tutelary spirit. But such divine protection as he may afford can be secured only by conformity to the rules and customs instituted by the first ancestors that continue to govern the social order. Thus when death, illness, or other misfortune strikes, the Rindi commonly suppose that their clan ancestor, owing to some human transgression, or because he has not been sufficiently propiti-
ated, has revoked his protection, thus exposing them to the ravages of spiritual agencies identified with pestilence and disease. They then speak of the *pakaleha marapu*, 'rebuke of the ancestor'. This suggests that the ancestor does not punish members of his own clan directly but rather allows retribution to be exacted by other, inherently malevolent forces. Since these are controlled by God, in a sense, then, the *marapu* protects his descendants from God's wrath. The ancestor is thus also designated as 'the shield for the hand, screen for the eyes' (*temi lima, dimba mata*), an expression which more specifically refers to the relics consecrated to the ancestor. This was explained to mean that the *marapu* screens off the hands and eyes of mortals from those of the Divinity, thus implying that God is too powerful a force to be confronted directly. While the ancestor represents mainly the positive aspect of divinity, therefore, God combines both its positive and negative aspects; so in respect of the Divinity the *marapu* provides a necessary separation as well as a connexion.

Knowledge of the first ancestors is contained in an area of mythology known as *lii ndai*, 'old lore, matters of old', or *lii marapu*, 'matters concerning the *marapu*'; the second phrase denotes both individual clan myths of origin and the history of the ancestors in general. The Rindi seem to have no single comprehensive myth that describes the creation of the world, and what I managed to record comprised various, sometimes disparate accounts of different aspects of the establishment of the present order of things. Here I shall only summarize certain general themes relevant to the topic at hand.

The *marapu* descend from an original group of beings conceived in the sky and placed on earth by God. Some accounts mention four males and four females, while according to others there were eight of each. (As noted, these two numbers are symbolically equivalent.) Another idea is that an original couple were placed at the 'liver and heart of the earth' (*eti tana, puhu tana*) — the centre of the world — whence their descendants (or a larger original group, according to the other versions) later spread to the two ends of the cosmos, the Base of the Sky and the Head of the Earth. The two groups then inter-married. The *marapu*, however, were all born at the Base of the Sky. That none were born at the Head of the Earth is attributable to the fact that, although in the context of the myth a broader conception of space is evidently implied, this place is normally identified with the interior of Sumba; and the Rindi state expressly that none of the ancestors was indigenous to the island.
As noted, the creation of the world involved the masculine sky and the feminine earth coming together, copulating, and then separating again. Thus in the beginning, I was told, the sky was so close to the earth that it was no higher than a man’s height. This creative coupling of the two halves of the cosmos is apparently linked with the theme of a great primeval flood (*mulungu*) which was caused by heavy rains. In order to escape the flood, the ancestors, who were then already present on the earth, ascended to the sky, the place of God. At this time, therefore, God and the ancestors, like the sky and the earth, were not yet entirely separated from one another. But these connexions were eventually broken. After various unsuccessful attempts had been made to reclaim the earth (specifically the island of Sumba), God sent down i Mbongu i Mbaku, a being with the form of a great bird or a winged man, who is also identified with mist (*mbongu* is ‘mist’; *mbaku* is a species of erne, *Haliaeëtus leucogaster*), to survey the flood. In Rindi, i Mbongu i Mbaku is regarded as *marapu* by the clan Pahada (originally from Karera). When he flapped his great wings the waters receded, and to make the muddy land firm he then brought the seeds of plants and trees and different sorts of stone and soil to scatter over the earth. Once the land was dry, the ancestors descended to the Base of the Sky. God then decided further to distance Himself from them by removing with the sun and the moon to the highest heavens. With reference to the idea that the universe consists of eight levels of sky and earth (*awangu walu ndàni, tana walu ndawa*), according to one narrative I recorded this He accomplished by ‘rolling up’ several intervening levels of earth and sky. After this dissolution of the original unity of man (i.e., the first ancestors) and God, the *marapu* dispersed from the Base of the Sky and eventually arrived on Sumba.

The Rindi have another myth, which evidently owes a great deal to the Biblical story of the tower of Babel, that records how the first ancestors (who included the forbears of the Savunese, Endenese, and other neighbouring peoples, as well as the founders of the Sumbanese clans) later attempted to reunite with the Divinity. To this end they set about building a ‘house of eight levels and eight layers’ (*uma walu nunggulu, walu màparu*) while gathered at a place called Mbabilu, reckoned to be that part of the Base of the Sky most distant from Sumba. The house is clearly a reflexion of the cosmos, composed of eight layers of earth and sky. But God took exception to the ancestors’ scheme and so conferred upon them different languages. Being unable to understand one another’s speech, therefore, the building was never
finished. As is consistent with the association of even and uneven numbers with completion and incompletion respectively, only seven levels could be erected, since each time they tried to add the eighth the attempt failed. Being unable to realize their plan, the ancestors dispersed all over the earth. Significantly, then, the dissolution of the unity of God and the ancestors also resulted in the separation of the ancestors from one another.

From the Base of the Sky the ancestors of the Sumbanese journeyed to the island by a route that includes many places whose names the Rindi identify as those of other islands in the Indonesian archipelago. The phrase ‘Base of the Sky’, which is phenomenally identified with the horizon, also designates these places collectively. The most complete list I obtained is as follows (places to which names are thought to refer, and glosses of certain descriptive phrases, are given on the right):

1. Uma Walu Nunggulu, Walu Mâparu 'house of eight levels'
2. Malaiya, la Hindi Wara Malaya and India
3. Kamutu Mandatoma, Lâtangu Nda Kabu 'dike that does not suffice, unworkable rice field'
4. Ia Hingi Nyautu, la Kadinja Wara 'the seashore, the sand'
5. Kuru Nduu Bokulu, Kuru Nduu Kudu 'great sea, small sea'
6. Ia Kanjenga, la Bara Linggi (?)
7. Ia Aji, la Mbâltanu Aceh and Belawan
8. Malaka, la Tana Bara Malacca and Singapore (tana bara is ‘white land’) (tana rara is ‘red land’)
9. Mahunggi, la Tana Rara The Riauw Islands
10. Ndua Riu, la Hapa Riu The Riauw Islands
11. Nggali, Palimbangu Palembang
12. Ndua Njawa, la Hapa Njawa Java
13. Jawa Bali, Jawa Muku Bali and Lombok (?)
14. Ruhuku, la Mbañi Bali
15. Dopu, la Ndima (or Ndima, la Makaharu, or la Maka, la Ndima) Dompu and Bima, or Bima and Makassar 24
16. Kambata Enda, la Kambata Ndaû Roti (i.e., the islands Eda and Ndao)

I do not know whether it is intentional that the list includes sixteen pairs of names; but it seems symbolically most appropriate that it should. Most ancestors reached Sumba by boat, while a few descended from the sky. They landed at various places, but most notably at Cape Sasar and the mouth of the Kambaniru river, where the ancestors of most clans now resident in Rindi and neighbouring domains disembarked.
Cape Sasar, or Haharu Malai, Kataka Lindi Watu as it is known in eastern Sumba, is thought once to have been the terminus of a stone bridge (*lindi watu*) that connected Sumba with neighbouring islands. According to Rindi myth, the bridge was destroyed by the buffalo of Umbu Pala — Umbu Lapu (*pala* is 'to cross over'; Lapu, a common man's name, is possibly related to *lapahu*, 'to pass [by]'), who brought the first of these animals to Sumba, when he drove them across. This personage is related to the founding ancestors of Ana Mburungu and several other clans in Rindi (see further Section 4 below and Chapter XII, Section 1).

Since the Base of the Sky is intermediate between the sky and the earth, the abode of God and the mortal world, the association of the *marapu* with this place is one expression of their transitional nature and their significance as intermediary spirits. In their time the first ancestors are said to have travelled freely back and forth between Sumba and the Base of the Sky. This aspect of the *marapu* also accounts for certain ambiguous and seemingly contradictory statements the Rindi make about them. The first thing to note is that they distinguish the first ancestors as *marapu* from more recent forbears, who in contrast are simply called 'the dead' (*mameti*). The dead resemble the *marapu* in that both have great power over the living. Misfortune can thus be ascribed to the 'rebuke of the dead' (*pakaleha mameti*) as well as to that of the *marapu*; so the dead too must regularly be propitiated. By contrast to the first ancestors, however, the dead are not represented as mediators between man and God; and as noted in Chapter III the land of the dead, located near the Head of the Earth, and the place of the *marapu* lie at opposite ends of the cosmos.

The distinction is further indicated by the notion of *kawunga mameti*, 'the first deceased', which refers to a descendant (or descendants) of the clan ancestor, in some cases his child, who was the first to die. There is also a general myth concerning the origin of death. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a complete version of it in Rindi, but the main theme is clear enough, namely, that since the earliest ancestors did not know death their numbers remained more or less static. God therefore decided that people should die, in order to initiate the cycle of life and death in which the spirit of the deceased would eventually be returned to the mortal world as renewed life. With regard to the symbolic femininity of the dead (see Chapter IX) and their connexion with the earth, it is significant that the very first person to die was a woman, and that she was buried at the Head of the Earth. Part of her name,
Rambu Harabi Raï — Raï Tana, moreover, means roughly ‘to till the earth’ (raï tana). The marapu, by contrast, are clearly masculine in character.

In accordance with this opposition, the Rindi claim that the first ancestors never died, but after establishing their lineages on Sumba simply returned to the Base of the Sky, where they are still present. The idea that they are immortal is of course also consistent with the representation of the marapu as divine beings who assisted in the creation, and the notion, fundamental to Rindi theology, of the clan ancestor as an eternally present, living spirit and an ultimate and absolute source of life. Yet, as they occupy an intermediate place in a continuous chain of being, it is evident that the first ancestors are as much connected with living mortals (and the dead) as they are with the Divinity. Thus, while the marapu are not classed as tau, ‘humans, mortals’, the Rindi also speak of them as normal ancestors who only later came to be regarded as marapu by their descendants. In addition, some of the first ancestors at least are said to have died, and in certain cases the locations of their graves are still remembered.28

In this regard it is useful further to consider Rindi ideas concerning the dead. First, there is the rather curious fact that the land of the dead, while occupying the opposite end of the cosmos from the abode of the marapu, is nevertheless called the parai marapu, ‘village, domain of the marapu’. In this context, however, the term was said not to refer to the first ancestors, but to those forbears who, by contrast to more recently deceased persons, have been completely assimilated into the afterworld. The Rindi therefore sometimes call these forbears marapu mameti, ‘dead marapu’ (though never just marapu).29 The phrase reflects the idea that the souls of the dead become marapu,30 or in other words that life and death are cyclically related. Since the dead, too, finally return to their point of origin, which is divinity, the notion that the first ancestors returned to the Base of the Sky might thus be taken as an expression of the same idea. That in one view they did not actually die, on the other hand, implies that they did not pass through this intermediate stage of existence, which agrees with the fact that the marapu, as I shall further illustrate in Chapter VII, represent both the beginning and the end of the cycle.

In an attempt to resolve much the same sort of apparent inconsistency among data collected elsewhere on Sumba, Lambooy (1930:282) suggests that while the eastern Sumbanese speak of the first ancestors as marapu, the term actually refers to something distinct from these,
which he interprets as God. In support, he cites an informant’s statement that although the ancestors are now designated as marapu, they should actually be called mameti beri marapu, a phrase I would gloss as ‘the dead who are equivalent to the marapu’. While I never heard the matter stated in quite this way in Rindi, there is some indication that they too sometimes distinguish the marapu as human ancestors from divine beings called by the same term, in a way that corresponds to Lambooy’s formulation. Thus in the case of i Mbongu i Mbaku, who as noted is at once conceived to be a mythical bird and a clan ancestor, for example, I was told that the two manifestations refer to members of alternate generations who in accordance with present customs share the same name. Generally, though, the two are spoken of as one and the same being; and as will later become clear from the significance of personal names (see Chapter VII), the distinction in any case presupposes an essential identity; thus it is not so definitive as might at first appear. I would suggest, therefore, that Rindi ideas involve two images of the marapu which, owing to the transitional nature of these beings, can neither be entirely separated nor entirely reconciled. The one connects the marapu with God and so entails an absolute, linear view of creation, while the other pertains to the cycle of life and death as it concerns the individual.

3. Tanggu Marapu

Other ideas concerning the marapu can be derived from what the Rindi call tanggu marapu, ‘portion of the marapu’ or ‘marapu possessions’. There are basically three classes of tanggu marapu. The first are the original or oldest clan relics, sometimes distinguished as the pingi marapu, ‘trunk of the marapu’, which are stored in a sealed wooden chest kept in the loft inside the peak of a clan’s ancestral house (uma marapu). These reputedly comprise golden and silver pendants, chains, and other ornaments, and sometimes metal images of the ancestral couple, boats, weapons, and the like. In ritual speech, these oldest relics, especially, are called ‘the portion, possessions of his (the ancestor’s) soul, the staff on which he rides’ (tanggu hamanguna, toku kalitina). They are thus the means by which the presence of the ancestral spirit is secured and signified within the house, and they serve as a medium in rites addressed to the marapu, performed before the principal house post (kambaniru uratungu). This provides us with an important instance of the association of metal with divinity, a theme I
shall further discuss in the next chapter.32

The second type of *tanggu marapu* consists of metal ornaments or pieces of beaten metal (*kawâdaku*) that are added to the oldest relics on major ceremonial occasions. These too are kept in the peak of the house, but they are placed in a separate container — a small basket or another compartment inside a larger chest that also holds the oldest relics. The third category is rather more general, as it includes several varieties of clan heirlooms: old and valuable pendants, chains, and other ornaments used as ceremonial decoration and alliance prestations (see Chapter XVII); old spears and shields; and cooking and eating vessels, gongs, and drums used in rites that concern the ancestor. In this sense, *tanggu marapu* would also include the *marapu* horse (*njara marapu*), an especially fine stallion brought to the clan’s ancestral house on important ceremonial occasions. In contrast to the two sorts of relics kept in the house peak, these items are stored in the lower section of the building. The two categories are thus distinguished as the *tanggu la hindi*, ‘possessions in the loft’, and *tanggu la kaheli*, ‘possessions on the house floor’.33

The three classes of *marapu* possessions are further contrasted with regard to the extent to which they are the object of prohibitions. It is strictly forbidden to view or touch the oldest relics and were anyone to do so they would become ill and most likely die. The Rindi thus describe them as extremely hot. The more recently consecrated relics are also normally out of bounds. But when first placed in the loft, they may of course be viewed and handled, albeit only by the older men; so these objects are considered somewhat less hot. The heirlooms, by contrast, may when necessary be openly viewed and handled by women as well as men. That they are not entirely cool, however, is shown by the practice of placing inside each container of old metal heirlooms one or more cheap, recently made metal pendants in order ‘to cool (i.e., render safe) the valuables’ (*pamaringu wângu banda*). Were this not done anyone who touched them would fall ill.

These ideas reveal a number of analogical associations illustrated in earlier chapters, viz., older : younger (more recent) :: upper part of the house : lower part :: hot : cool :: male : female. They also indicate that the older the relics the more closely associated they are with the clan ancestor, thus providing another instance of the general attribution of greater spirituality to the oldest member of a class. The Rindi similarly distinguish more recent forbears from the earliest ancestors — the first four generations (including the apical ancestor), according
to specific formulations — as cool and hot respectively. The fifth generation is thus spoken of as the *kawunga maringu*, ‘first to be cool’. In this context, however, the contrast of hot and cool appears to express an absolute rather than a relative distinction; and this corresponds to the opposition between the first ancestors (*marapu*) and more recent forbears (or the dead) shown in other areas of Rindi thought. It is significant, therefore, that they often refer to the original relics, in contrast to the other sorts of *marapu* objects, as ‘(the) *marapu*’. The implications of this designation were subject to some debate in Rindi. Thus some informants claimed that in this context the term does not actually refer to the ancestor himself, for which reason the relics should properly be called *tanggu marapu* (see Lambooy 1937:430). But this seems not to be definitive, since sometimes they use *marapu* and *tanggu marapu* to distinguish the oldest from the more recently consecrated relics.

The extent to which the Rindi identify the oldest relics with the ancestor is related to the question of whether they conceive of these as a medium between man and God, in which case they would be symbolically equivalent to the ancestor himself, or as a medium between mankind and the ancestor. Actually, both interpretations seem to be contextually valid. Put another way, the question concerns what exactly it is that is present in the peak of the ancestral house and thus identified with the metal relics. Liturgies performed in the interior right front corner of the house are typically directed to the *matimbilu halela, mahapangu halimu*, ‘the one who rises lightly and dams off with ease’, who is further addressed as ‘Lord’ (Umbu) and is requested to descend (from the house peak). In general, the phrases are understood to refer to the *marapu* as a conveyer of messages to God. But according to another interpretation, it is not the actual ancestor, sometimes distinguished in this context as the ‘big, principal *marapu* (marapu bokulu), who is referred to here, but a subordinate spirit described as his *eri*, ‘younger (sibling), subordinate’, or *papalewa*, ‘servant’. In contrast to the ancestor, who remains at the Base of the Sky, this spirit is continually present in the house, leaving only to transfer messages to his superior.

The Rindi also address rites to ‘the one who sits at the top of the ladder, the mouth of the house peak, the one who is present at the notch and the grooves, at the flutes and the upper house’ (*na mandapu la kapuka wua panongu, la ngaru uma dita, na maninya la hongapu la payuu, la kalarangu uma dita*). As the phrases refer to points of transition between the upper and lower parts of the building, they suggest
an association of mediating spirit with significant boundaries, a theme further developed in the next chapter. Again, by different interpretations, these expressions refer either to the marapu or to his spiritual subordinate. Especially in the former instance, therefore, the foundation of the peak might be compared to the Base of the Sky, as a point intermediate between the earth and the heavens, the respective places of mankind and the Divinity.

But whichever is the case, the phrases matimbilu halela, hamapangu halimu clearly denote a relatively accessible and active agent conceived in opposition to a distant and inactive manifestation of spirit. In this respect the terms halela and halimu, both of which mean ‘light (of weight)’, ‘easy’, and ‘young’, are significant, since the marapu is associated with things that are mbotu, ‘heavy’, ‘difficult’, ‘demanding’ (see Chapter VIII). In opposition to the Divinity, however, the marapu is represented as an active spirit; thus the relation of matimbilu halela and marapu is formally identical to that of marapu and God. I suggest, therefore, that when the Rindi say that it is not actually the marapu but his active subordinate who is present in the house, they are in a sense thinking of the marapu as God. Just as the matimbilu halela and the marapu are usually not distinguished, moreover, so God and the marapu are so closely identified in some contexts that they appear conflated in Rindi representations; thus, as noted, phrases used to refer to God are sometimes interpreted as references to the marapu or other spirits subordinate to God. In this way, then, representative and represented are symbolically equated. This area of Rindi thought, I suggest, is best appreciated by considering the two members of each spiritual pair as contrasting aspects — active and inactive, mobile and immobile, accessible and inaccessible, close and distant — of an essentially unitary entity. One crucial point revealed by this analysis is that in each case it is the active member of the pair that is the inferior. Further examples of this pattern are found in the following chapter, and later I shall show how it accords with ideas concerning types of authority.

Several general observations can now be made regarding the relation between God and the first ancestors. First, it is clear that whereas in active divinity represents unity, active divinity is connected with segmentation. The marapu ancestor can thus be described as a manifestation of divinity (and the Divinity) specific to a single clan, while the Rindi conception of God implies that He is the totality of the different clan ancestors. Since God is inactive in the world, moreover, for all
practical purposes he can be ignored entirely. One need only be concerned with propitiating the clan ancestor. The ancestor is thus rather more than a spiritual intermediary; he is the surrogate god of the clan.

4. Special Attributes of Individual Marapu

The Rindi credit each of the clan ancestors with special attributes and powers. These are described in the clan myths and sometimes form the basis of individual clan traditions. The ancestor of the clan Ana Mburungu Kalindingu, called Umbu Kalindingu (*kalindingu* is 'to float'), for example, is reputed to have travelled everywhere by sea; hence, contrary to the usual custom, members of this clan are buried in a wooden coffin called a boat. By virtue of particular powers of their ancestors, several Rindi clans are able to provide special ritual services to others. The ancestor of the clan Ramba, for example, is claimed to have been able to cure insanity. Thus, prior to the final mortuary rite, the betel container of a deceased nobleman who was so afflicted is hung in this clan's ancestral house so that his descendants will not suffer a similar fate.

Another instance of this pattern concerns what is called *wai maringu*, 'cool water'. As I have already mentioned cooling rites and shall need to refer to them again below, it is useful to describe here in some detail what these involve. 'Cool water' refers simultaneously to the power to render cool; to consecrated water that is used for this purpose; to a deity who embodies this power — the 'cool water marapu' (*marapu wai maringu*), or 'the mother of raw meat, father of cool water' (*ina tulu mata, ama wai maringu*) — and to a clan, or a functionary belonging to a clan, which possesses (or 'holds', *āpa*) such a marapu. Only a few clans in Rindi hold or regularly exercise this power. Sometimes the cool water *marapu* and the clan's founding ancestor are one and the same, but often the figure has a distinct name and is then vaguely identified with a more recent ancestor. The Rindi invoke the cool water *marapu* in a great variety of circumstances, too diverse to list here, whenever something considered hot and thus threatening to well-being must be dispelled, or when they feel the need to secure special divine favour and protection.

The Rindi distinguish two sorts of cool water *marapu*: the *wai maringu mànjaku*, 'calm cool water', and the *wai maringu mbana*, literally 'hot cool water'. The former, which is the one the term *wai maringu*, when used without further specification, usually refers to, is the more
important of the pair. He neutralizes what is hot by dispensing blessing and divine favour. The other type, by contrast, directly takes away the 'heat'. The two are thus generally complementary, though the *wai maringu mbana* need be invoked only when the matter at hand — incest, for example — is especially hot. Unlike the *wai maringu màn­jaku*, this spirit is never invoked alone.

I shall briefly describe the usual procedure for invoking the *wai maringu mànjaku*. The principal first summons the headman of a clan that possesses such a *marapu* to his house. As is usual, the rite is held in the right front corner of the building. A priest representing the principal then presents the functionary of the *wai maringu* with one or more flakes of metal (*kawàdaku*). How many are given depends on the number of separate matters to be communicated to the cool water *marapu*. The functionary also receives a payment, usually one metal pendant and chain, but in more serious circumstances a horse or other live animal as well. These items, presented with a portion of betel and areca, are called the *huluku pahāpa*, 'offering and chewing ingredients', and the *tanggu hamanguna, toku kalitina*, the same expression as refers to ancestral relics (*tanggu marapu*). They thus serve as a medium for invoking the cool water *marapu*. A vessel of water in which four tiny metal chips are placed, which is to serve as the 'cool water', is then set before the functionary and the priest, who sit side by side facing the principal house post. The priest then dedicates the metal objects, together with the offering of betel and areca, usually a pig, and several fowls, to the cool water *marapu* and to the principal's own clan ancestor. One cock, preferably a black one I was told, is specifically for the cool water *marapu*. After the meal, the functionary sprinkles the cool water throughout the house and over all persons present. A description of rites involving the *wai maringu mbana* is given in Chapter XVI.

The Rindi conceive of the cool water *marapu*, specifically the *wai maringu mànjaku*, as an intermediary, conciliatory force separating and protecting mankind from whatever it is that is regarded as hot. They describe him as 'the sugar cane at the ridge, the banana at the boundary (or 'limit')' (*tibu la palindi, kaluu la padira*). 'Ridge' and 'boundary' both identify this figure as a mediator and protector, while the two plants signify coolness (see Chapter VIII). It appears, then, that the cool water *marapu* takes the place of the principal's own ancestor. As to why this should be so, it seems relevant that in many circumstances in which cooling is required — particularly transgression
and illness (which is seen as a consequence of transgression) — a clan’s own *marapu* is thought likely to be offended to the extent of revoking his protection. The ‘heat’ of the situation, therefore, may in some measure be associated with the presumed anger of the clan ancestor. Accordingly, to invoke the cool water one must always turn to another group.

As noted just above, the cool water *marapu* is often distinguished by name from the apical ancestor of the clan which possesses it. This is also the case with other special types of *marapu* held by a few clans in Rindi. These, however, serve the purposes of the possessor alone. One sort is the *marapu raïngu* (*raïngu* is ‘assiduous, diligent’, especially with regard to agricultural labour), a figure addressed in rites that concern wet rice cultivation, performed in a house located near the fields. Others include the *marapu nggerungu* (*nggerungu*, ‘to fish with a net’) and the *marapu patamangu*, ‘*marapu* of the chase’, or *marapu ahu*, ‘dog *marapu*’, which are concerned with fishing and hunting respectively. In each case the medium of the *marapu* is a small basket containing pieces of metal, which is hung from the ceiling of a particular building. The significance of these entities seems mainly to lie in their use as special media in rites connected with specific activities, and in this respect they somewhat resemble the spirits associated with the various altars, which I shall describe in the next chapter. Nevertheless, like the principal *marapu* of a clan, they too reveal some association with human forbears. The *marapu raïngu*, for example, was said to have been the first ancestor of a clan to cultivate wet rice.

Another special cult figure is the *marapu andungu*, ‘skull post *marapu*’, which in Rindi is possessed exclusively by the noble clan, Ana Mburungu. This is the aforementioned Umbu Pala — Umbu Lapu, a personage who is variously considered to be the father or brother of the clan’s apical ancestor. The relics consecrated to this figure are kept in the clan’s ‘skull post house’ (*uma andungu*), which, with the post itself, traditionally served as the focus of war ritual in Rindi. As noted the names of this *marapu* also form part of the complete title of the apical ancestor of Ana Mburungu, whose relics are kept in the clan’s oldest house (*uma marapu*). As promised, then, this provides an example of the contextual separation of names which together denote a unitary entity, in order to distinguish special ceremonial functions.

The ancestors of some clans are especially connected with a natural species or phenomenon. The group is then said ‘to treat (the thing in question) as *marapu*’ (*na marapunya*), and the ancestor is spoken of as,
for example, the marapu wuya, 'crocodile marapu'. Usually, however, the ancestor and the species are not considered one and the same. Often, the connexion derives from an animal having provided the ancestor with vital assistance. Thus the ancestor of the clan Lamuru was saved from drowning by a shark when, as the result of a curse imposed by his mother's brother, his vessel capsized at sea. On reaching dry land the shark died and was given a human burial. Members of this clan, and the agnatically related clan Luku Walu, therefore, may not eat shark.

Indeed, whenever a species is considered edible a clan that regards it as marapu is invariably prohibited from eating it. The food is then designated as pandangangu marapu, 'not eaten by (or because of) the ancestor'. Not all species that are forbidden to a clan, however, are regarded in this way, though the ancestor, or a more recent forbear, often figures in the mythological rationalization of the restriction. Thus, to cite one instance, members of the clan Kanatangu will not eat eel because their ancestor was once served with a child's umbilical cord in place of eel when he arrived late at a feast; but the Kanatangu people do not speak of the eel as marapu. While some clans apparently have no special dietary restrictions, others have more than one. Married women continue to follow the food prohibitions of their natal clans, and these are sometimes maintained by their children; so it can happen that a group will adopt the prohibitions of a wife-giver. Married women should also observe the restrictions of their husbands' clans. Some people, however, thought that, provided no deleterious effects ensued, they were not absolutely obliged to do so. But in general I think they do avoid these foods, especially when the species in question is regarded as marapu.

Like the clan ancestor, certain marapu species serve as special clan patrons. Thus when someone is killed by a crocodile, for example, his death is seen as a punishment for an offence he or his agnates committed against a clan that regards the animal as marapu. A fine must then be paid to this clan, and a rite of atonement performed. Similarly, the clan Dai Ndipi has power over the kabàla, 'thunderbolt, lightning that strikes', which is thought to emanate from a cannon their ancestor, the marapu kabàla, fires upon the earth in order to punish those who transgress against his descendants. When someone is struck by lightning, therefore, Dai Ndipi can demand a heavy fine from his clan mates; a smaller fine is required when only livestock, buildings, or trees are struck. After the death, a Dai Ndipi man must 'cool' the
victim’s corpse by sprinkling it with water, before it can be taken to the house for burial. The deceased’s betel container and knife (which represent his soul) are then turned over to Dai Ndipi to be reclaimed once the fine is settled.

Another variation on this theme is provided by the clan Kurungu, which, because the ‘grandmother’ (âpu) of its founding ancestor turned into a monkey (buti), holds this animal as sacrosanct.43 They may therefore neither kill nor eat monkeys. Kurungu also possesses an avenging power called muru buti, ‘power of the monkey’, which is identified with an often fatal disease manifested by convulsions and a very high fever.44 The sufferer, I was told, shakes violently like a monkey swinging on a branch, and his teeth become exposed and chatter like a monkey’s. The treatment, provided by a Kurungu man, preferably in the clan’s ancestral house, consists of washing the patient with a solution of water and the leaves of a tree called lindi buti, ‘monkey bridge’. But for this to take effect, the Kurungu marapu — sometimes described as the ‘monkey marapu’ (marapu buti) — must be invoked with a food offering; and the sufferer must give Kurungu a horse, a pendant, and a chain. If the cure succeeds, he should provide another two horses and further metal valuables. These are then reciprocated with textiles.

This procedure is one instance of what the Rindi call paatangu wiki, ‘to subordinate oneself’ (from ata, ‘slave’), whereby a person obtains spiritual benefit by placing himself under the protection of another clan’s ancestor. As the afflicted is removed, either actually or in name only, to the house of the clan (and the ancestor) concerned, the custom is also known as ‘occupying one half of a house, one plank of the floor’ (umangu hapapa, kahelingu hapungu). This further illustrates the close association between the ancestor and the house in Rindi; the occupation of a particular building is thus the means by which the link between a person or group and an ancestor is realized. In a sense, therefore, a person who thus ‘subordinates himself’ becomes a member of the host clan and so must observe its dietary restrictions. Moreover, as in the case of someone killed by lightning, for whom the fine has not yet been discharged, the ancestor during this time is in possession of the sufferer’s soul. Should he die, therefore, his betel container and knife are retained in the host clan’s ancestral house, and to reclaim them his agnates must make a payment of horses and metal valuables.

The use of marapu to denote a natural species or an inanimate object raises the question of whether the word always has reference to ancestors. Noting several applications of the term in eastern Sumbanese
similar to those considered above, Lambooy (1937:431-2) suggests that sometimes it does not; and if by this is meant that the thing directly referred to is unequivocally regarded as an ancestor, then clearly he is correct. From the instances just cited, and other evidence that could have been adduced, however, I have the impression that Rindi thought connects all manifestations of marapu in one or another way with human forbears. Two other, closely related features of marapu, then, are that entities designated with this term are individualized — they are given individual names and accorded specific attributes — and that each is the property of a particular lineal descent group. The concept is thus an aspect of the social order; and as I shall demonstrate just below, in these respects the marapu differ from the other classes of intermediary spirit the Rindi distinguish.